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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LISBON 000079

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [PO](#)
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S FEB. 3 MEETING WITH PORTUGUESE FM
AMADO

REF: A. 08 LISBON 2708
[1](#)B. LISBON 0052

Classified By: POL/ECON COUNSELOR RICHARD REITER, FOR 1.4 B, D.

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY. Ambassador Stephenson met February 3 with Portuguese Foreign Minister Luis Amado to discuss a range of issues. Their last extended discussion was on November 13 (ref A). Amado told Ambassador that the January 26 GAERC had made progress on the issue of Guantanamo detainees and that Portugal remains committed to leading within the EU on this issue. Regarding Afghanistan, Amado confirmed that Portugal will contribute two OMLTs and a medical unit to ISAF, plus a C-130 for Afghan election security. He also hinted that Portugal might consider redeploying the Special Forces QRF it withdrew from Afghanistan last summer. Amado pledged to look into roadblocks in the Portuguese MoD that are obstructing progress on several military-related bilateral issues, and he confirmed that he would like to visit Washington in the coming months to meet with Secretary Clinton. END SUMMARY.

GUANTANAMO DETAINEES

[1](#)2. (C) Ambassador Stephenson thanked FM Amado for Portugal's leadership in the EU on resettlement of Guantanamo detainees. Amado noted his disappointment that the January 26 GAERC did not offer a path towards a broad EU/US bilateral agreement, but he said significant progress was made. Separately, Amado's Chief-of-Staff and his Senior Diplomatic Advisor commented to post that the GAERC press coverage did not do justice to the discussions. They see the detainee issue as being handled similarly to the issue of Kosovo recognition, where the EU gave an umbrella blessing to members to take individual action. These officials noted that the MFA has received letters from three NGOs in Portugal, including Amnesty International, welcoming the GOP's leadership on detainees but urging caution about accepting criminals into Portugal, which highlights the fact that public opinion has not yet weighed in on the pros and cons of accepting detainees. The officials also note that freedom of travel within the Schengen-zone makes the issue topical for all member states.

MILITARY ISSUES

[1](#)3. (C) Ambassador sounded out Amado on Portugal's commitment to NATO's ISAF mission in Afghanistan. Amado confirmed that Portugal will contribute two distinct OMLTs. Though the deployment date of the second OMLT is not yet confirmed, it will not/not be merely a replacement for the currently-deployed OMLT (whose end date is also not confirmed). Portugal is fully committed to a twelve-month deployment of a medical unit to Kabul airport, and to a three-month deployment of a C-130 to support Afghan elections. Of note, Amado hinted that the GOP might

reconsider deploying a SOF unit (probably the company-sized QRF it withdrew from ISAF last August). Amado did not provide details but noted that the GOP is "waiting to be asked by the U.S." for additional commitments in Afghanistan, which we took to mean that a POTUS or SecState call to PM Socrates or FM Amado would be helpful.

¶4. (C) Ambassador expressed the USG's puzzlement over the GOP's failure to accept a U.S. proposal to settle an irritating wage dispute affecting Portuguese employees at Lajes Field in the Azores. Amado explained that the GOP needed confirmation that the regional Azorean government fully endorses the deal and will not later criticize the GOP for "selling out" the employees. (Post will work with the Azorean government to secure seamless, public support for the deal.) Separately, MFA officials have suggested that the timing of the recent Bilateral Commission meetings that discussed the wage proposal, November 21, coincided with a politically-charged debate in parliament over the Azores Statute (ref B), and now that that issue has been resolved, the timing might be better for the GOP to accept the wage proposal.

¶5. (C) Further on Lajes Field issues, the Ambassador laid out how USG proposals for removing a condemned hangar and repaving the runway are hanging fire, pending Portuguese replies. Amado took the issues on board, and Ambassador followed up by expressing general USG frustration that these and other issues (e.g., the proposal for an Airspace Training Initiative based at Lajes Field, assigning a Portuguese liaison to US Africa Command, joint training and exercises,

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etc.), many of which are Portuguese initiatives to which we have made good faith responses, get endlessly stuck either at Air Force HQ or in the Portuguese Ministry of Defense. Ambassador did not need to name Portuguese Air Force Chief-of-Staff General Luis Araujo as the key roadblock; Amado took the point and pledged to look into it.

WASHINGTON VISIT

¶6. (C) FM Amado confirmed that he and MFA PolDir Nuno Brito would like to visit Washington "before summer", if a meeting with the Secretary can be arranged. Separately, MFA officials have told us they are aware that the Secretary has spoken/met with the British, German, and Spanish FMs in recent days, and that a Secretary/Amado phone call would be welcome.

STEPHENSON